

State wins federal grant to start special education administrator certification program

The Delaware Department of Education and the University of Delaware will launch a certification program for special education administrators as part of the state's development of administrator pipelines.

The department won a federal grant worth almost \$1 million over five years from the U.S. Department of Education to support the development of the Delaware's Special Education Administrative Leadership (SEAL) Program. The shortage of appropriately trained special education leaders is problematic nationwide but even more acute in Delaware. Although a special education director certificate exists in Delaware code, only 42 percent of current directors hold the certificate.

"With no existing certification program in Delaware, we know this is critically needed in Delaware to prepare the state's special education leaders for their ever-evolving roles and responsibilities," Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said.

SEAL will be an alternate route to certification program for special education administrators that will be implemented and evaluated by the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Delaware. The program will reflect national standards for both educational leadership and special

education administration. In parallel with the launch of the training program, the department will seek to revise the Delaware regulations to align the language to the competencies and expectations associated with the new SEAL Program.

The first cohort will begin in Spring 2020.

The approach to developing special education leaders combines general leadership training with very specialized training in the range of knowledge and skills required to be an effective special education administrator, with a particular focus on the application of knowledge through numerous experiential learning opportunities and ongoing professional development post-completion.

The project has four fundamental goals:

- To design a special education leadership program that affords participants opportunities to deepen their knowledge and skills relative to both leadership and special education issues and administration;
- To implement the program with four successive cohorts (totaling 55 participants);
- To support program completers in providing leadership in special education contexts;
- To measure the impact of the program on program participants, students and families, and educational systems.

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